

*"I always carry my donor card with me. It says that my whole body can be used for organ donation and medical purposes after my death. I would like to encourage as many people as possible to do the same"*

Dr Bal Mukund Bhala

Co-ordinator Hindu International Medical Mission  
Former President Hindu Council UK

## Organ donation is a great gift but more donors are needed

Everyone can make a difference

Please

- Talk to your family
- Register your wishes
- Carry a donor card

To find out more about organ donation, or to join the NHS Organ Donor Register, contact:

**The Organ Donor Line**  
**0845 60 60 400**

**[www.uktransplant.org.uk](http://www.uktransplant.org.uk)**

Information on Hinduism is available from:  
[www.bbc.co.uk/religion](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion)

## Transplants save lives



# Hindu Dharma and Organ Donation

A guide to organ donation  
and Hindu beliefs



## Organ donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone else who needs a transplant. Hundreds of people's lives are saved each year by organ transplants. Organs that can be donated by people who have died include the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas and small bowel. Tissue such as skin, bone, heart valves and corneas can also be used to help others.

## When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and nurses are committed to doing everything possible to save life. Organs are only removed for transplantation once all attempts to save life have failed and after death has been certified by a doctor or doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Most donated organs come from people who die from a severe brain injury and who receive treatment on a ventilator in an intensive care unit. The brain injury damages vital centres in the brain stem which are essential to maintain life. No one can live once these centres have been destroyed. Tests can show conclusively when this has happened.

In some circumstances, patients who die in hospital but are not on a ventilator may also donate. They are called non-heartbeating donors.

Sometimes people who do not die in hospital can become tissue donors.

## Consent

The consent, or lack of objection, of those closest to the patient is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important for people to discuss their wishes with their loved ones. Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loss.

## Care and respect

The removal of organs is carried out with the greatest care and respect. The family can see the body afterwards and staff can contact a chaplain or local religious leader if the family wishes.

## Hindu Dharma and organ donation

There are many references that support the concept of organ donation in Hindu scriptures. *Daan* is the original word in Sanskrit for donation meaning selfless giving. In the list of the ten *Niyamas* (virtuous acts) *Daan* comes third.

*"Of all the things that it is possible to donate, to donate your own body is infinitely more worthwhile."*

*The Manusmriti*

Life after death is a strong belief of Hindus and is an ongoing process of rebirth. The law of Karma decides which way the soul will go in the next life. The *Bhagavad Gita* describes the mortal body and the immortal soul in a simple way like the relationship of clothes to a body:

*"vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya  
navani grhnati naro 'parani  
tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany  
anyani samyati navandi dehi."*

*"As a person puts on new garments  
giving up the old ones  
the soul similarly accepts new material bodies  
giving up the old and useless ones."*  
*Bhagavad Gita chapter 2:22*

Scientific and medical treatises (*Charaka and Sushruta Samhita*) form an important part of the *Vedas*. *Sage Charaka* deals with internal medicine while *Sage Sushruta* includes features of organ and limb transplants.

*"The important issue for a Hindu is that which sustains life should be accepted and promoted as Dharma (righteous living).  
Organ donation is an integral part of our living."*  
Hasmukh Velji Shah, International Trustee, World Council of Hindus

*"Organ donation is in keeping with Hindu beliefs as it can help to save the lives of others."*

Mr Om Parkash Sharma MBE, President, National Council of Hindu Temples

